

Senate Bill 284

EXHIBIT 2
DATE 3-22-07
SB 284

Good morning. Mister Chairman, members of the committee--for the record--my name is Terri Elander. I am the International and Public Relations Director for the Missoula Children's Theatre. I am delighted to speak to you about Senate Bill 284 and to encourage you to continue to support the Arts and "Cultural Tourism."

MCT's work contributes to cultural tourism throughout Montana. We tour to 125 communities annually, and at each tour stop, we cast kids in one of our original musicals. The highlight of the week is the performances, featuring the kids. From Glendive's "Beauty Lou and the Country Beast" last November, next month's production of "The Jungle Book" in Absarokee, to THIS week's production of "Robin Hood" in Winifred (where my father was born, by the way), MCT covers the state. As a native Montanan, I love seeing MCT's presence in every corner of this wonderful and expansive place we call home—Montana.

Our mission is to help youth build self-esteem, but at the same time, our work promotes economic activity. Aunts, uncles, grandparents, and other family members buy tickets, schedule celebration dinners in restaurants, and stay in hotels. The arts are thus not just good for the soul—they are also good for local business.

Montana Arts Council and Cultural Trust support enable us to keep our touring program affordable for the communities—most of them small—that invite us to their town. Moreover, we are delighted that our work merits support from the State: it is truly a fiscal ‘stamp of approval’.

Our summer Performing Arts Camps also have a significant economic footprint. We serve more than 200 teenagers from Montana, 22 other states & Canadian provinces, and several countries. About 80% of the campers’ families travel to Missoula for the performances, stay in hotels, visit National Parks and historical sites, and.....of course.....shop!

Our constituents really say it best and here are a couple of examples:

From Dillon, MT

MCT is an important element in our community. The kids expect it, look forward to it, and we get a great turn-out at our auditions. MCT opens doors to our youth and can change lives. Often, MCT is their first direct experience with the arts. It also draws a different audience than our other events, which broadens our outreach. Thanks!

From Absarokee, MT

Needless to say, I am a very proud father and am very grateful for MCT and other drama related opportunities that my boys have had! They both really enjoy it, and I'm convinced that participation in drama really helps their abilities to communicate and to function without inhibitions in the crazy world in which we live.

Thank you for providing this opportunity for me to testify on behalf of Senate Bill 284.